

BIOGRAPHY.

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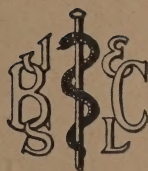
B. R. Townend.

MESSER CINTIO D'AMATO:
A BARBER.

BY

B. R. TOWNEND,
L.D.S.L'pool.

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Messer Cintio d'Amato: A Barber.

By B. R. TOWNEND, L.D.S.L'POOL.

THERE has recently come into my possession a book published in Venice in 1669 and written by a barber-surgeon, Cintio d'Amato. According to Guerini ("History of Dentistry," p. 242) : this edition was a reprint of the original edition published in Naples in 1632. From the title page (fig. 1) it will be seen that the book is called "New and most useful practise of all that pertains to the Diligent Barber : that is of letting blood, healing wounds and embalming human bodies. With other marvellous secrets and figures." There is no mention of d'Amato in the British Museum Catalogue, but I am informed by Dr. J. D. Rolleston that the Royal Society of Medicine possesses a copy of the 1669 edition. Another edition was published in Naples in 1671 under the supervision of Tommaso Antonio Riccio who, according to Guerini, was a disciple for many years of d'Amato, and who indulges in hyperbole concerning his master and praises his work in the following bombastic manner : "This book, the offspring of Master Cintio d'Amato, excellent in the Barber's Art, ought to find a place in the Bosom of Eternity ; because by reason of its having been given twice to the light it has proved its worthiness to live for ever in the memory of men, gaining for itself, by its excellence, immortal glory before all such as are practised in the Art " (Guerini, op. cit., p. 243).

As d'Amato has something to say about the teeth and their treatment which throws some light on the state of dentistry and its relation to the barber-surgeons in Italy during the middle years of the seventeenth century, it may be of interest to record his contribution, small as it is, to the practise of dentistry.

The book is also noteworthy, according to Guerini, as probably being the first in the Italian language in which dental matters are spoken of independently of general medicine and surgery.

It is of considerable interest to note that d'Amato's range of dental matters is extremely limited. No mention is made of the treatment of toothache or of caries or of prosthesis, and what is even more remarkable,

he does not make the slightest allusion to the extraction of teeth. In the words of Guerini : " If in a book treating of all that which appertains to the diligent barber the most important dental subjects are passed over in silence, this shows that, contrary to the generally diffused opinion of to-day, the dental art was not at that time (at least not in Italy) exclusively, or even in great part, in the hands of the barber. Even at that time there must have been dental specialists and proof of this may be found



FIG. 1.—Title page of d'Amato's book. New and most useful practice of all that which pertains to the diligent barber : that is of letting blood, healing wounds, and embalming human bodies. With other marvellous secrets and figures. Composed by Cintio d'Amato, a Neapolitan, in Venice, M. DC. LXIX.

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in d'Amato's book itself in the chapter entitled 'Necessity and Origin of the Barber's Art.' The author, after having spoken of the divisions which the practice of medical art had undergone from the most remote times, and after having attended to the great number of parts into which medicine was divided in the time of Galen, adds : ' Which may also be seen in our own times, for as many as are the members of the human body, so many are nowadays the various kinds of doctors and of medicine. Some

are for the teeth, some are for the ears, some for sexual maladies, others are ordinary doctors, others cure cataracts, others ruptures and stone, some make new ears, lips, noses and others remedy harelips.'” How far this is true it is difficult to say. It should be remembered that a similar, in fact almost identical, statement was made by Herodotus concerning the medical lore of the ancient Egyptians, and the two texts are so much alike that one suspects that d’Amato may have been reading the works of the Father of History and inserted this, not wishing seventeenth century Italy to be outdone by ancient Egypt.

My copy of the book is a beautiful example of seventeenth century printing bound in contemporary vellum and printed on a laid paper. The proportions of the type to the page are excellent, and it would appear from a “trade list” at the back of the book of sixty-one volumes published by Gio. Battista Brigna, that this was a firm of some repute in Venice. The book, consisting of about one hundred and seven pages, commences with a series of verses by d’Amato himself and others, including Giovan Battista Bergazzone, also a barber. Most of these verses are in the form of eulogies of the two doctors and “Martyrs in Christ,” Cosmos and Damianus, “special protectors of the Art and of the Author.” Then follows a long chapter on embalming, and then a treatise on what may be called minor surgery, covering therein such subjects as anatomy in relation to bleeding, and concerning this operation the author speaks at considerable length. Much attention is devoted to the details of operations and treatments involving leeches, cupping, scarification, cauteries, issues, blistering, first-aid treatment of the wounded, and care of the sick.

Six sections are devoted to dental disease. I give d’Amato’s chapter numbers, each chapter being divided into two sections :—

Cap. XXXIV. “On the relaxation of the gums.” “Preparation for strengthening the gums and making teeth firm.”

Cap. XXXV. “On tartar and stains on the teeth.” “Another preparation for whitening and preserving the teeth.”

Cap. XXXXII. “Mode of burning hartshorn, very necessary in preparations for the teeth.” “Water of salt which makes the teeth white and is also good for ulcers of the gums.”

I propose to transcribe the more interesting portions of the text, discussing them individually, and then consider some of the more interesting materia medica used in the prescriptions.

I am indebted to Mr. J. N. Sanders, B.A., Peterhouse, Cambridge, for the translation ; Mr. A. Price, of Barnsley, for valuable suggestions concerning the chemistry of the prescriptions ; and Mr. Warren R. Dawson for his ever-willing help in identifying and providing interesting details concerning some of the drugs. I have already mentioned the name of Dr. J. D. Rolleston in connection with his furnishing of bibliographical details. Without the help of these gentlemen the lore of d’Amato would have remained buried so far as I am concerned.

ON THE RELAXATION OF THE GUMS.

[CHAPTER XXXIV.]

“The gums are wont to become relaxed in such a manner that the teeth sometimes fall from them, which is wont to be caused by a great humidity distilled from the former or from the stomach or from the brain or by some misfortune or from the blow of a stone, in case of which the following bath shall be prepared; this has the advantage of binding together and exsiccating, but abstain from excessive food and from eating things which bring and produce abundance of phlegm, and above all from drinking excessively.

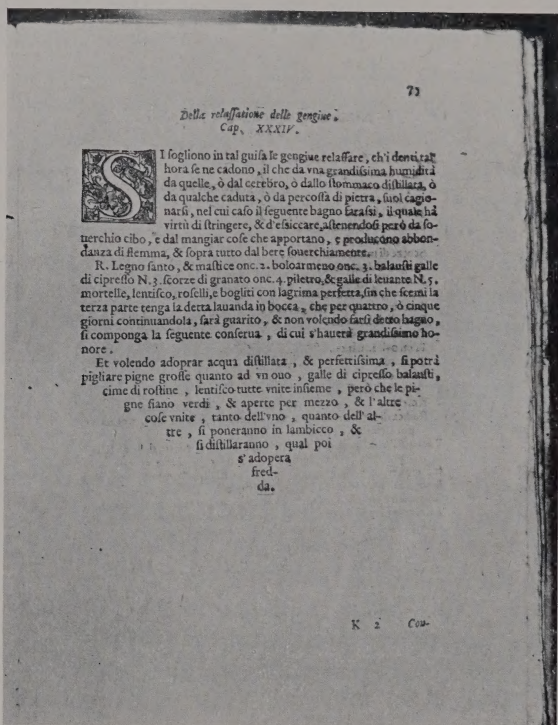


FIG. 2.—Cap. XXXIV. “On the relaxation of the gums.”

“R Lignum vitæ and mastic 2 oz. bolo armeno 3 oz. balausti, galls of cypress N 3, pomegranate rinds 4 oz. pyrethrum and levantine galls N 5, myrtles, lentiscus arbutus fruits boiled with lagrima perfetta until a third part is evaporated, keep the said wash in the mouth, continuing for four or five days when one will be cured, and if one does not wish to prepare oneself the said bath, the following conserve may be compounded of which very great fame will be obtained.

“Be pleased to use distilled water and very perfect pine cones as large as an egg, balausti, cypress galls, the tops of small leafy twigs, lentiscus,

all united together may be taken, but let the pine cones be green and split up through the middle, and the other ingredients put together as much of the one as of the others, put into an alembic, distilled, and it is then used cold."

Loss of teeth resulting from periodental disease has concerned men from the earliest times. Assyrian, Greek, Roman, Syriac, Arabian and medieval writers have given us prescriptions for the treatment of this condition. It is likely that scorbutic conditions were much more prevalent than they are to-day which would account for much of the trouble.

The next prescription is:—

"Preparation for strengthening the gums and making the teeth firm."

Burnt stag's horn	}	..	..	..	..	3 drams for each item.
Seeds of Agatia						
Hematite						
Red corals						
White mastic						
Red sandal wood	..	..	..	..	Half ounce.	
Incense bark	}	..	..	..	An ounce per each item.	
Rinds of lemon yellow						
Mirabolans						
Fine dragon's blood						
Dyer's Spanish Rubia						
Terra Sigillata						
Oriental bolo Armeno						
Balausti of Levant						
Aromatic willow herb						
Pyrethrum of Levant						
Tobacco						
Sarcocolla						
Cyprus Galls						
Arbutus fruits						
Burnt rosemary roots						

Infused in Greek Wine and then dried in the shade."

These ingredients are powdered and passed through a sieve, and infused for twenty-four hours in aqua vitæ, dried again and incorporated with syrup of myrtle and sorb apple, the syrups to be well cooked before incorporating the powder so that the mixture will keep. In the words of d'Amato: "I have preserved (the conserve) in that manner for two years always keeping its colour and the same odour." The method advised for using this mess is to spread it upon a piece of linen and put it over the injured gum in the evening before going to bed. The worthy Barber goes on to say that "heed must be taken that it is not required of any conserve to have an odour save that which is made for whitening, as odour is rather of harm than of benefit, since the Barber should employ odours both in the smoothing stones and in soap balls but certainly not in diseases of the gums and teeth."

Polypharmacy had a great attraction for these old people. Perhaps the most notable example of it was the celebrated "theriac" from which is derived our word treacle. This amazing mixture survived until the late seventeenth century and was compounded of scores of drugs. Many of the substances used in d'Amato's formula are of an astringent nature and probably had some efficacy in doing what they were intended to do.

Following this prescription our author continues : “ In the ‘ Etiando ’ disease of the gums, where there is concourse of matter, I have proved the barks of *lignum vitæ* infused in cistern water for twenty-four hours to be of great utility ; to take of the said water in the mouth four or five times, the patient’s body, however, having first been purged.”

I have not been able to discover the meaning of “ etiando ” disease, but the text suggests pyorrhœa and treatment of that disease by *guaiacum* (*lignum vitæ*) has been used in modern times.

OF TARTAR AND STAINS ON THE TEETH.

[CHAPTER XXXV.]

“ It happens most times that from the vapours that arise from the stomach, a certain slime is formed, as can be seen on awakening in the morning, because by rubbing the teeth with a cloth it is seen remaining thereon ; therefore the teeth should be rubbed and cleaned every morning

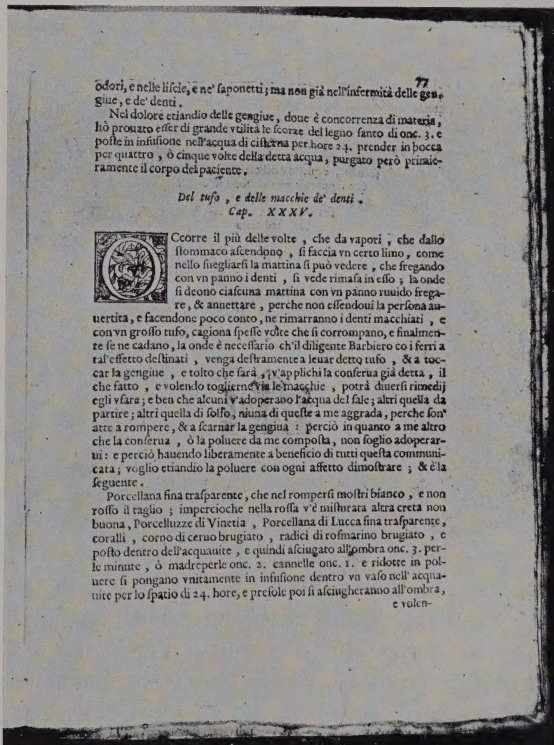


FIG. 3.—Cap. XXXV. “ On tartar and stains on the teeth.”

with a rough cloth, because if the person is not warned and takes little account of it, the teeth will remain stained therewith ; and if a large amount of tartar is formed it often happens that the teeth become corrupt and finally fall out. It is therefore necessary that the diligent Barber

should remove the said tartar with the tools intended for such a purpose, and to free the gums. When it has been taken away, let him apply there the conserve already mentioned and having done so and being desirous to remove the stains he can use diverse remedies." D'Amato then goes on to say that some recommend salt water, fresh water, or water of sulphur, but he deprecates their use, saying that they are apt to break and scarify the gums. He is wont to apply either the conserve aforementioned or the following powder :—

"Fine white porcelain, which on breaking shall show the edge white and not red because in the red there is mixed another clay which is not good. Porzeluzze di Vinetia, fine transparent Porcellana di Lucca, corals, burnt stag's horn, burnt rosemary roots, placed in aqua vitæ, and then dried in the shade, 3 ozs., tiny pearls or mother of pearl 2 ozs., Cinnamon bark 1 oz., and reduced to powder. They are placed together in infusion in a vase containing aqua vitæ for 24 hours, then they are taken and dried in the shade and when it is desired to use them a root of mallow or giant fennel with which Apulia abounds beyond measure is to be taken and having soaked the said root in lemon juice, dip it in the powder and rub the teeth with it." D'Amato goes on to say that a piece of rough linen cloth can be used in place of the root and that small pellets can be made of the powder with water of red roses, which preparation is "most delicate, and those who cannot support the conserve in the mouth will be able to avail themselves of this in its place, and it will have the same effect."

The foregoing has considerable historical value and interest as it indicates that the scaling and cleaning of teeth was one if not the only surgical operation performed by the barbers of seventeenth century Italy. Cleaning of the teeth was long one of the duties of the barber even after he became a hairdresser, in fact it was practised in this country within recent years.

Another complicated prescription follows for :—

"WHITENING AND PRESERVING THE TEETH."

Fine Porcellucci di Venetia.
 Fine coral 4 oz.
 Burnt stag's horn 3 oz.
 Cuttle bone 2 oz.
 Red sandal wood 1 oz.
 Yellow „ „ 2 oz.
 Transparent Lucca porcelain 1 oz.
 Aromatic willow reed,
 Choice dragon's blood,
 Paglietta di Levante,
 Cinnamon'ana (= of each) 2 oz.
 Powder of tiny pearls or of mother of pearl 2 oz.
 Burnt rosemary roots, infused in the lachryma 2 oz.
 Nutmeg 2 oz.
 Balausti of Levant 4 oz.
 Cigri, dyer's madder dissolved in lemon juice 2 oz.
 Alacca di Fiorenza at the discretion of the Barber."

These substances are pulverised and passed through a sieve and the powder is mixed with a syrup consisting of an infusion of arbutus fruits,

syrup of myrtle and rotomele, and boiled on a slow fire for four or five hours. Instructions are given to add cochineal, dragon's blood and Spanish madder to make it a red colour if necessary. The concoction is to be rubbed on the teeth with the root or with a piece of rough cloth.

The ingredients of this recipe seem to suggest a somewhat abrasive dentrifice.

The method of burning hart's horn, mentioned in Cap. XXXXII, is to expose pieces of the horn in an open clay vessel in a glass or pottery

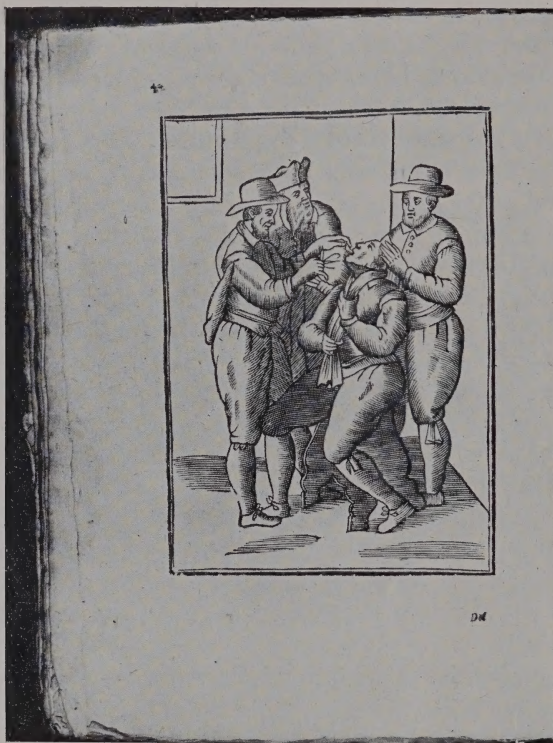


FIG. 4.—A woodcut illustrating the operation of bleeding the lingual artery.

furnace for forty hours, and the final water of salt is nothing more nor less than hydrochloric acid, a common and very effective cleaner of teeth in the past but not very good for the teeth themselves !

Many of the drugs mentioned and used by d'Amato have some considerable interest, and illustrate the persistence of traditional remedies. Some of them have, of course, definite therapeutic value. I will take them in the order in which they appear in the text.

Lignum vitæ : From this tree is derived guaiacum.

Bolo armeno : A magnesian clay with styptic and astringent properties. It is mentioned as one of the chemicals used by the Alchemist in

the Chanons Ye Mannes Tale of Chaucer, still official in some of the European pharmacopœias.

Balausti : Balaustum, the flowers of the pomegranate as opposed to its fruit. A common drug mentioned by Pliny (Nat. Hist. Bk. xxiii, Chap. 59) as useful to make firm loose teeth. Pomegranate rinds recommended for the same purpose.

Pyrehtrum : Was a very common drug among the ancients for dental troubles.

Lagrima perfetta : I have not been able to identify this, but would surmise that it was some kind of wine, e.g. Lachrima Christi.

Hartshorn : This drug has a history almost as long as that of man.

Seeds of Agatia : I am unable to identify this. W. R. Dawson suggests that it may be the local name of some plant dedicated to St. Agatha, who was canonised in the third century A.D.

Hematite : Red oxide of iron. A very ancient drug used by the Egyptians.

Coral : Has had a long association with the teeth, particularly with the prevention of teething disorders.

Incense bark : Incense, rechele or stor was a common dental remedy in the ~~fifteenth~~ century (Henslow, "Medical Works of the ~~Fifteenth~~ Century").

Mirabolans : The immature dried fruits of terminalia chebula, an Indian tree, very astringent, containing 30 per cent. tannic acid.

Rubia di Spagna : Spanish madder, bitter but not astringent.

Terra Sigillata : An astringent earth from Lemnos with an interesting story attached to it. "The clay was dug with great ceremony upon one particular day in the year only. The pit, which had been kept closed and guarded during the remainder of the year, was opened with solemn rites by the priests on the sixth day of August, six hours after sunrise. A quantity of the earth was dug which was estimated to meet the needs of the following year. It was carefully washed, dried, and moulded into small blocks, each of which was imprinted with the seal of its origin, and then sent to Constantinople for distribution. The earth was for centuries the monopoly of the Sultan of Turkey, and the penalty of death was attached to opening the pit on any other than the appointed day by the proper authorities" (Chas. La Wall, "The Curious Lore of Drugs and Medicines," p. 69). Other forms of terra sigillata were in use and the imprints upon them were the earliest form of trade mark.

Sarcocolla : A tree, *Penœa sarcocolla*, producing a gum. Described by Pliny (Book xxiv, Cap. 82).

"Porzeluzze di Vinetia" : Appears to be some kind of earth found or marketed in Venice. Possibly a kaolin.

Paglietta di Levante : Paglietta means crystals, but I cannot identify what particular crystals are meant.

Cigri : Unable to identify.

Alacca di Fiorenza : Some form of lac or shellac. Probably a confection sold by the druggists of Florence.

Rotomele : Rutæ mel—honey of rue, a preparation made with the essential oil distilled from the leaves of rue and mixed with honey.

So, Cintio d'Amato takes his bow. Another century was to pass before Pierre Fauchard laid the foundations of scientific dentistry. D'Amato, however, was a picturesque figure in a picturesque age, and if he has done nothing else he has left a book behind him that it is a pleasure to handle, as anyone may judge if they will pay a visit to the rare book room of the British Dental Association, where it now lies in the loving care of Mrs. Lindsay.

